

REMARKS

Claims 1, 3-8, 10-13, and 15-17 remain in this application. Claims 2, 9, and 14 are now canceled. Reconsideration of the application is requested.

Independent claim 1 is again rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b), along with various dependent claims, as anticipated by Japanese publication 3-284443 to Nishitake. Reconsideration is requested.

Initially, it appears that at least one feature of the claimed invention may have been overlooked. The Examiner identifies the Nishitake case 11 as a one-piece covering and the Nishitake inner panel 6 as a door interior element. Nothing in the Nishitake publication, however, suggests that the case 11 is “suspended with its upper edge on” the inner panel 6, as claim 1 both previously defined and still defines. Figure 5 of the Nishitake publication, in fact, shows the upper edge of the Nishitake case 11 as displaced from, rather than suspended with its upper edge on, the Nishitake belt line part 6a.

Claim 1, moreover, is further amended above to reflect features described, for example, in paragraphs 0018 and 0023 of the specification. A suspension connection between the Nishitake case 11 and belt line part 6a as specified in claim 1 does not exist, as noted above. Consequently, the Nishitake air bag 12, when inflated by the inflator 13, does not release such a suspension connection between an upper edge of a covering and a door interior element as claim 1 now specifies.

Neither claim 1 as it previously appeared in this application nor claim 1 as it appears above is anticipated by the Nishitake publication. U.S. Patent 6,682,093 to Tajima et al. is relied on as a secondary reference in section 5 on

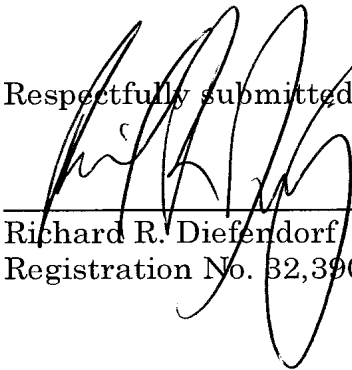
page 3 of the Office Action to reject claims 11 and 15. Nothing in the Tajima et al. patent, however, suggests modifying the Nishitake publication such that it would meet the limitations in claim 1 discussed above, and it is respectfully submitted that claim 1 above is patentable. The rest of the claims in this application depend on claim 1 and are considered patentable as well.

This application should now be in allowable condition. If there are any questions regarding this Reply or the application in general, a telephone call to the undersigned would be appreciated since this should expedite the prosecution of the application for all concerned.

If necessary to effect a timely response, this paper should be considered as a petition for an extension of time sufficient to effect a timely response. Please charge any deficiency in fees or credit any overpayments to Deposit Account No. 05-1323 (Docket #028987.52962US).

Respectfully submitted,

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